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SUBJECT: EGYPT'S ECONOMY: December 28 PRESS ROUND-UP

¶1. (U) The following are notable economic news stories that appeared over the past week in the Egyptian press:

State Petroleum Company to Borrow US\$2 Billion

¶2. (U) The state-owned Egyptian General Petroleum Company is negotiating a loan of US\$2 billion from 33 banks, in order to finance debts to foreign companies and establish a number of new oil fields (Al Alam Al Youm, 12/20/09).

Rachid Discusses Russian and Ukrainian Wheat Imports

¶3. (U) Minister of Trade and Industry Rachid Mohamed Rachid called for deepening economic ties with Russia after his meeting with the Russian Minister of Trade. Rachid noted that Russia guaranteed its wheat imports would meet Egyptian regulations. Four days later, Rachid told the press that Ukrainian wheat imports would not likely meet the 10% protein regulation that the Supply Commodities Authority required of it (Al Mal, Al Alam Al Youm, 12/24/09, Al Masry Al Youm, 12/28/09).

Site Recommended for First Nuclear Power Plant

¶4. (U) A report by an Australian consultant to determine the site of Egypt's first nuclear power plant was submitted on December 23 to the Egyptian Nuclear Power Plant Authority (NPPA), and will be evaluated by a technical committee in the Egyptian NPPA and the Minister of Electricity. While official sources would not confirm the recommended location, press reports have suggested that the plant will be located at El Dabaa, on the Mediterranean coast west of Alexandria. Separately, a Russian delegation visited Egypt last week to explore participation in the expected tender for equipping the nuclear power plant. NPPA President Yassin Ibrahim has indicated that few Egyptian components will be used in the plant (Al Masry Al Youm, 12/23/2009).

Parliament Approves Draft Law for Nuclear Regulation

¶5. (U) After approval by the Shura Council last week, the Industry Committee of the People's Assembly approved the draft law for the regulation of nuclear activities, sending it to the President for signature. During the discussion of the draft law, Abou Al Hoda Al Serafi, the Chairman of the Nuclear Materials Authority, said that Egypt would offer an international tender for the exploration of uranium (Al Masry Al Youm, 12/23/2009).

Egypt's Role at Copenhagen Summit Criticized

¶ 6. (U) Mostafa Tolba, an Egyptian who is the former chairman of the United Nations Environment Program (UNEP), offered statements to the press criticizing the performance of the Egyptian government in dealing with climate change at the Copenhagen Summit. Tolba called for a national committee to address climate change, saying he was unaware of who in the Egyptian government is responsible for the issue. Echoing Tolba's criticism in an op-ed column in Al Shorouk newspaper, Salama Ahmed Salama wrote that the Egyptian delegation to the Copenhagen Summit was comprised of bureaucrats, rather than scientists and professional environmental negotiators (Al Masry Al Youm, 12/23/2009, Al Shorouk 12/20/2009).

GOE Considering Safeguards on Turkish Steel Imports

¶ 7. (U) Minister of Trade and Industry Rachid Mohamed Rachid has asked the Ministry's Foreign Trade Sector to study the possibility of imposing anti-dumping safeguards on Turkish steel imports (Al Mal, Al Alam Al Youm, 12/28/2009)

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